

or in the long frying pan. These steaks I could not eat hot enough to prevent their congealing in their progress to my throat; consequently the roof of my mouth would become so thickly cased over with tallow as to necessitate the use of my knife to remove it. About the beginning of March [1807], the Indians came in from their hunt, encamped around my trading-house, and began to pay their debts, and trade for the surplus. A crust had formed on the snow, and all the young Indians and boys went off, and, for amusement, wantonly tomahawked every deer they could find, as the poor creatures, breaking through the crust, could not get out of the way. Deprived of venison, the wild fowl came in abundance. I made up my packs, and got ready for a start, trading off the remnant of my goods with scattered bands on my way down to Prairie des Chiens.

My returns for the season's trade were good; and I concluded to operate with the Sioux as long as I should remain in the business. The following winter [1807-1808], I re-occupied my last year's trading-post on the St. Peter's, but under very different circumstances. The wantons recklessly killing off the deer last March, brought a judgment upon all. There was not a deer to be seen. The winter was a very mild one, and the buffalo did [not] travel so far south as we were—consequently all were without provisions. The nearest tribe of Indians to me were fifty or sixty miles away, on the trail the buffalo usually took in the winter season, and they were in a starving state.

I had consumed every article I had of the eatable kind, including several packs of deer skins. I and my men roamed about in quest of game, without success. We set traps of all kinds, in which we occasionally caught wolves, fishers, martens, and minks, all of which went to the pot, and I could take my share of all, except of the wolf. My cook said he would dress a piece, and dish it up so I would like it; so he cut off a choice bit from one just brought in, and put it into the bake-kettle, seasoning it with pepper, salt and mustard, adding some Stoughton bitters, and a glass of high wines to give it a taste of chicken. But with all this knowledge of refined cookery, I could not stomach what tasted to me like a mouse-nest; for when better food cannot be